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SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR WHOM? A STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY

State University of New York at Stony Brook

PH.D. 1981

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Social Science for Whom?
A Structural History of Social Psychology

A Dissertation presented
by
Carol Cina
to
The Graduate School
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

AT STONY BROOK

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Abstract of the Dissertation
Social Science for Whom?
A Structural History of Social Psychology
by
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in
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The practice and ideology of social psychology was examined in the context of its real world presence. Its deep history in the beginnings of social science itself was detailed in order to render intelligible the particulars of its systematic relationship to social classes and their purposes. The fact that military-sponsored social psychology suddenly burgeoned in U.S. academia at the end of World War II was noted and investigated; it was found that social psychology's mode of grasping human behavior was central to the conception and execution of psychological warfare during that war. A content analysis of the postwar social

psychology literature demonstrated what has been known in the halls of academe for some time: that the study of the small group is a creature of the United States military. Further investigation, into a time period beginning in the late 1950s, unearthed the cybernetic information network into which all social science productions now feed. An example from the 1970s was taken from social psychology to show how even an ordinary piece of social science research work will be turned into a weapon if possible. The problem of the consciousness of the social science worker was treated at some length.

That immense multitude is ordering itself; its order responds to an awareness of the need for order; it is no longer a dispersed force, divisible in thousands of fragments shot into space like fragments of a grenade, trying by any and all means, in a fierce struggle with their equals, to achieve a position that would give them support in the face of an uncertain future.

Che Guevara
Man and Socialism in Cuba

When the subject population has had enough of being studied, researched, analyzed, and tabulated, and actively demands instead to be fed, housed, clothed, schooled, served, alive, and sovereign, then the sponsors of research shift their assets towards the sponsorship of a different science, an alternative profession . . . the police professions.

Martin Nicolaus
"The Professional Organization of Sociology:
A View from Below"

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AND

PREFACE

My thanks, first of all, to my committee members and most of their families, who each in their own ways unflinchingly supported me through eight years of work and play as a graduate student at Stony Brook. My thanks also to Barbara Baskin of the Special Education Department at Stony Brook for making it possible for me to work on this research and writing project long enough to finish it.

Probably the greatest single intellectual influence brought to bear on this study comes out of my participation in the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. I feel humble gratitude especially to the people of the United States, Viet Nam, Cuba, and China whose struggles have so much helped me to learn and to struggle and to think in my own life.

John Taylor at the Modern Military section of the National Archives in Wash., D.C. is the person co-responsible for unearthing the Psychology Division of

the Office of Strategic Services. I talked over with him what I was looking for, and he told me about the existence of the OSS papers. It was a pleasure to work with him; he helped me for many long weeks.

Lots and lots of friends helped in all kinds of ways, most especially with human contact. For writing a dissertation is a lonely task. It's training for isolated work.

.

This dissertation began eight years ago in a social psychology methodology seminar. I noticed that many of the research studies in social psychology we were reading had been military-funded, so I asked "How do we go about finding out how this stuff was used in Viet Nam?" The leader of the seminar, who was a low-level Office of Naval Research administrative functionary in addition to being a professor of social psychology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, replied that he didn't know, and that perhaps it was impossible to know from outside the system. I replied that we weren't outside the system. We were inside it; we were the workers; we did the research.

To help preserve our sanity in a climate which stood truth on its head, several of us in the social psychology group at Stony Brook began meeting regularly to try to break down some of our academic isolation and maybe work on some ideas together. This grew into a several years-long enterprise as part of which we published the Psych-Agitator, a group-developed and -produced periodical about what's wrong with psychological social science in the real world. We at least addressed the contradiction among ourselves caused by the differential institutional legitimacy of students and teachers in the group. Needless to say, our experimentation in that sphere did not solve the problem. The Psych-Agitator study and discussion group was a supportive place for me to work out thoughts and strivings toward thoughts, and to begin to dare to write where others could read what I had to say.

Back in the second half of the 1960s, I worked with two of the people whose subsequent writings are generously sampled in this study: Martin Nicolaus and Michael Klare. Martin and I both worked with the group putting out the antiwar periodical Viet-Report on a couple of shoestrings and lots of donated labor

time. He, Mike, and Viet-Report editor Carol Brightman were doing the original work on counterinsurgency social science even as it was being used in Viet Nam. I, however, had never had truck with the social sciences except in a few college courses, and I wasn't especially interested in that aspect of the war. I tell this story to illustrate part of the problem. We are such an elite stratum of intellectual workers that we are more or less shielded from public scrutiny and other reflections of social reality. Who outside of the fields even knows to be interested?

Anyway, it was Mike Klare and another friend at the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) who helped me start on my way down the road to this dissertation. They advised me to begin by finding out about the research infrastructure--how is it funded, and how is research policy administered? They were and are experts at oppositional research; NACLA has existed since the mid-1960s and is still one of the best research groups around. Carol Brightman has been my good friend ever since those days. Once, when she read one of my drafts, she grumbled that I needed a breakthrough. But then, she had this kind of stuff figured out 15 years ago.

I gathered up about a carton full of Xeroxes from various archives in carrying out my study plan. Since I quote extensively from many of these documents, I thought it would be good to make the papers accessible in case anyone should be interested in looking at them. Accordingly, I've deposited them in a filing cabinet in the social psychology program at Stony Brook.

Finally, I want to address the problem of the hidden meanings in language. When I speak or write, I try to de-program my mind and avoid use of the generic masculine when all people are what is meant. Few of the authors whose works I have quoted in this study were of the same persuasion, however, even those whose intellectual efforts were hell-bent to uncover the processes of consciousness. I decided to use the quoted material as it was without comment, since the tale I was trying to unravel was complicated enough by itself. But my train of thought was disrupted every time it happened, for I know that behind this use of language lies the web of a concept-structure in which women are thought about as subordinate.

Social Science for Whom?
A Structural History of Social Psychology

INTRODUCTION

This study is about three processes: it's about what we do every day if we are social science workers, it's about the distant and the recent history of social psychology in particular, and it's about our consciousness about our work.

Social psychology, perhaps even more than sociology, lies along the interface between the practice of physical science methodology and the study of society. It tries to apply quantification and experimentation to questions of individual and group behavior. In a synthetic sense, it's the study of humans in society. But as always in academic disciplines, it's proper definition depends on one's conceptual stance.

Like all scholarly studies, this one conducts its investigation from a conceptual framework. The main guideline I have used is my conviction that science is a social product, and therefore socially biased. So

from the start I go against a main conviction of perhaps the vast majority of social science workers who have been trained to agree that it's "objective."

In my judgement, social science is not just an activity. Social science is a body of beliefs as well. Throughout the study, therefore, I have demonstrated that social science consists of both a methodology and an ideology, with attachments of the most intimate order to the class system of the capitalist period of human history.

The study begins by introducing and explaining the apparatus of vocabulary and concepts which are the flashlights and the maps for my investigation. The framework is explicitly Marxist, because, in my experience, of all the systematic framework systems available at this time, it provides the best approximation to reality for this type of study. Secondly, it is a genetic relative of social science, both having sprung from the common parentage of the European system-change which debouched in the industrial revolution. Marxism and social science are antagonistic to each other, however. They always have been. The reason is that they have historically been on opposite sides in real-world battles between social classes. Thus, an

investigation of social science taken from a Marxist perspective is bound to be critical.

The account of social psychology's deep history comprises two chapters. The first is about England. This chapter depicts the social situation, the historical actors in those parts of the action that are relevant to social science, and the first acts of social science together with their justifications. The main question it raises and offers evidence on concerns the class allegiance into which social science practice was structurally bound at its creation. The chapter seeks to establish that the practice of social science is intrinsically class-bound and that it is bound to the rulers, as a class.

The story continues in Germany and the United States in the next chapter. Social science entered its second stage of development in industrializing Germany, where it fleshed out to a process whose institutions were more recognizable as today's. It entered the United States like a turnkey technology import, whereupon it exhibited the same structural interrelatedness with the rulers, as a class, as it had in European countries. The main institutions are specified through which social science was forged as an integral part of maintaining the work relations and

the state apparatus of U.S. capitalism. The chapter brings the historical account through World War I, at the end of which at least one strand of psychology had passed the test of war.

The next chapter picks up the trail of U.S. social psychology per se and follows it on its journey as military attache. The chapter grew out of the question: Why did social psychology suddenly burst onto the U.S. academic stage in such a big way right after World War II? Various military and other governmental archives were searched for evidence bearing on this point, and the results of investigation presented. Through content analysis, an attempt is also made to measure the effect of the huge military financial investment in the social psychology product. The chapter seeks to use social psychology as a case study in the practical aspects of social science's class servitude.

The final chapter offers another case study--this time of social psychology in counterinsurgency and destabilization work. Again, the case is argued by showing the organizational trail leading up to the effect in the world of a piece of social psychology. As in earlier chapters, evidence is presented which shows the process happening step-by-step. The chapter

extends the description of social science's integration into the population management technology of the industrial period. It offers evidence for the charge that we as social scientists now work within a computerized information-gathering enterprise whose objective is to make the world safe for corporations.

Throughout, my major concern has been to shed some light on two areas usually systematically obscured from the view of the social science worker. One of the areas is the realm of conscious organizing work which is behind the doing of social science. The research administration bureaucracy which neutrally executes policy decisions from higher up acts as a curtain of respectability for a deed of corruption. The other area is our own consciousness about our work, the ideology in our social science. We are implored to deny it, and to believe social science is value-neutral due to its positivist methodology. That's rubbish.

CHAPTER 1

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This study takes the perspective that social science is not just an activity. Social science is a body of beliefs as well. Throughout the study, social science will be demonstrated to consist of both a methodology and an ideology, with attachments of the most intimate order to the class system of the capitalist period of human history.

For the purposes of this study it is essential to consider the concept of social class. Social classes refer to groupings of population within a society which share a structural relation to the means of production. Thus, members of ruling classes, as a collectivity, own and/or control and make the significant decisions about productive processes of entire societies. The working classes taken as a whole do not own or control these means of production; their members earn their living by selling their ability to work. For working-class people as a whole, their ability to work (their labor power) is the only

factor of production they own or control. The other factors of production (e.g., capital, machines, and labor time) are all owned and controlled by members of the ruling class or their representative institutions.

Though the familiar Marxist criterion of relation to means of production cleaves the planet's population into social classes more and more crudely as time goes on, it is still essential for examining the role of social science work in society. There is an ample literature on the use of social class as an analytic category and on its social reality in human history. Marx (1967), Marx and Engels (1947, 1955), Bottomore (1968), and Domhoff (1967, 1970), for example, are excellent sources. This study does not pretend to substitute for the original scholarship of others on social class. It merely takes up that concept as an already sharpened analytic tool and applies it to the natural history of social psychology.

Social Psychology in Life

It would be a mistake to seek to understand the body of practice and beliefs we call social psychology as an isolated atom of human activity. It is a

sub-field within psychology, itself a component section of the broader category of human activity we call social science. In seeking to locate social science among all the technical and social inventions that constitute the capitalist order in the industrialized West, this study seeks to find and explain social psychology's small berth. Moored in among others of its kind, social psychology is tied into the main frame of capitalist society by a web of knots. To know the place of social psychology, one must know the place of social science.

The first social science in our tradition was created along with the first crush of capitalist organization of industrial production: in England in the early 19th century. The earliest "scientific" social investigations were systematically developed in response to problems of governing the newly-created but unappreciative industrial proletariat.

Two social classes had by that time irrevocably appeared in history: a large social class of those who did the industrial-era work, and a small social class of those who controlled the process of that work and owned its material means. It took around a century for the features of what would become social psychology to grow distinct. But insofar as social psychology functions

to supply both framework and alleged facts about ourselves in society, its root hairs lie precisely here--among the problems of the industrial workplace: people agglomerated into relatively small groupings, perforce working together under a discipline imposed by the class which owned and controlled capital society-wide.

Visualize social psychology as a mushroom. A mushroom is merely a small fruiting body of a much larger plant whose main substance lies out of sight just underneath the surface of the earth. Unseen, the mycelium of a fungus weaves symbiotically among the roots of trees and other green plants, gathering up its nutrition. Here and there a fruiting body which we can see--a mushroom--grows up out of the mycelium when moisture and other conditions are favorable. Social psychology came out of social science in this way, sprinkled by finance in a favorable climate. Social science, for its part, depends on the class system of capitalism the way a fungus mycelium interpenetrates for its existence with the roots of the trees and grasses. Capitalist-dominated society is for social science the grass and the trees. Throughout its natural history capitalism has been the source and sustenance for social science, supplying the nourishment it's not designed to make itself.